

# ADOPTING WESTERN CULTURE OR ENHANCING INDIGENOUS CULTURE: Takdir Alisyahbana's Discourse on Indonesian Path toward Progress

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It was a historical event  
on Indonesian history, white held  
*a polemic of culture* on June 8-10, 1935  
in Solo. The urgent topic was discussed by many  
participants concerning "Adopting Western Culture or  
Enhancing Indigenous Culture". Takdir Alisyahbana is one  
front who promoted that Adopting Western Culture is a good  
choice for Indonesian path toward progress in the future. Ki  
Hajar Dewantara, Sanusi Pane, Poerbatjaraka, Sutomo, etc., on  
the other fronts that they really promoted on enhancing  
Indigenous Culture. *It seems to me*, that the debating both  
sides was a very hard reasonings. Ki Hajar Dewan-  
tara and his group said that we should enhan-  
cing Indigenous Culture based on  
*eastern culture* which a very  
emphasized a spiritual.

They frankly argued that eastern culture was not intellectualism, individualism, materialism, and egoism, but just it approach towards them was different than was realized by western culture. For example, in case of egoism, that Indonesian people was not egoism as was done by western. It was a very misunderstanding said this group, that in our society based on their tradition and culture, they really sincere for the sense of *sacrifice* that causally born

the happiness of their heart and the unlimited sincerely was not hoped by their own advantage. According to Takdir that the future of Indonesian Culture must be inherent with a development of our society, but western culture is the only one of our reference.

Frankly speaking, said Takdir, because of the lack of elements which contributed a *dynamic* toward Indonesian Culture, especially on national education, therefore our national culture is in *Crisis*. Toward understanding of *Crisis* term according to Takdir was the lost of sense of responsibility. Thus, the crisis of culture not by stopping of creativity, but rather than separation of creativity from the sense of responsibility. In this sense, if cultural development not enhancing of sense of responsibility, the hope and toward human development, so the existence of its culture was in *Crisis*. The particular case of literature aspect, that the priority *Crisis* concerning of moral deficit. For example, poet who writes a novel without a clear purpose, according to Takdir view was not consciously realized his task. On the other hand, language is in *Crisis*, if in its development not support man in developing his capacity in thought, especially as its manifested in scientific, Philosophy and technology. In order to overcome that condition, our national culture must be contributed by *Western Cultures* concerning *intellectual ethos, individualism, materialism and egoism*. The fear of those spiritual excess above, according to Takdir was not in realistic. Because the backwardness of our national culture was the lack of those vital elements, which caused our nation unable to face an International Competition among a progress nations.

Therefore, based on that reasoning, Takdir suggested Indonesian nation have to study from the West. In the Western Culture, a man has

responsible for his work, a man must develop intellectualism, manage nature, collect materialism-those efforts

the ultimate target is for the happiness of their selves. By those dialogues in this process was born *materialism* namely man was a very concern toward physical appearance. On the other hand, was born intellectualism, was the product of reasoning of man, intellectual discourse among each others. From that point, Western Culture develop based on materialism, intellectualism, individualism, etc. Concerning economics perspective was born an Industry, trade, and modern imperialism. At the same time individualism is affected on unlimited competition on the economic and social issues. After having completed of the owning the vital elements of western culture: materialism, intellectualism, individualism, and egoism, among western nations such as French, Dutch, British, Spain, German, etc., they effort to develop a new organization which the main task to promote social justice, peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, the ideal target was not achieved, comparing with their *egoism* to colonize among Asia, Africa, Latin America Nations. From this sides, it was a tragic of western culture that was realized among western nations toward developing countries. But, it was argued by Takdir, that we should study the positive aspect of western culture which produced science and technology and economic that finally dominated the greatest part of developing countries, rather than we imitated the negative aspect among western nations which causally imperilized toward other nations.

This paper would like to describe a dynamic figure of Sutan Takdir as one of the most prominent Indonesian Scholar in the early twentieth century on focusing his a short intellectual

biography, his thought on western cultural paradigm which resulted a progressive culture, the strategy of Takdir in order to maintain it, and Takdir's policy program oriented to establish it.

#### A SHORT INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF SUTAN TAKDIR (1908-1994)

There is no doubt that Takdir Alisjahbana was one of the most prominent philosopher and educator in the early twentieth century of Indonesian history. He was born on 11 February 1908 in Natal, Tapanuli, the right bank of Natal river which mounds in the Indian Ocean, slightly north of the Equator. His father came from Bengkulu in the south, and popularly called Raden Alisjahbana or gelar Sutan Arbi hailed from west Sumatra. The father was a schoolmaster and also became an *Imam*, Moslem religious officer.

Takdir completed the Holland School (which used Malay and the medium of instruction in the Junior years, and Dutch in the Senior) in Sumatra, then went to teacher's training college in Bandung, west Java. He taught high-school at Palembang, south Sumatra, from 1928 to 1930 and eventually graduated with a L1.B in Jakarta in 1942.

Takdir married a Sumatra wife in 1929, her name Sumiati who died in 1935 and has two children: Iskandar and Sofyan. His second wife was a Javanese, her name Raden Roro Sugiarti, whom he

married in 1941 and who died in Los Angeles, USA, in 1952 and has two children: Mirta and Sri Artaria. His third wife is a German academic her name Margret Axer, who at the time of their marriage in 1953, was literary and cultural editor of the Rhein Zeitung in Coblenz, Germany. Takdir married with Margret has four children: Tamalia, Marita, Marga and Mario.

According to a short biography, Takdir began writing for the nationalist

magazine, *Jong Sumatran* when he was sixteen, and published his first novel when he was twenty one. In 1933 he became one of the founding editors of *Pujangga Baru*, the literary magazine which is generally considered to have been a major forum for the development of modern literature. The ensuing birth of *Pujangga Baru* and its place in Indonesian literary life has up to now been well documented less known is that as an extra-curricular enterprise it had the support of one of the highly placed Dutch staff members of *Balai Pustaka*. F. Dahler, of mixed Dutch-Indonesian descent who later sided with the Indonesians in the revolution introduced the now well known literary triumvirate of Takdir Alisjahbana, Amir Hamzah and Armijn Pane to Kolff's, printers and publishers at Jakarta.

Thus, in both his creative writing and his literary criticism, Takdir was an uncompromising modernist in the pre-war years. *Pujangga Baru* became a major vehicle for Indonesian nationalism on the cultural front, as the modernist argued for the western concepts of *individualism* and *rationalism* to which their command of the Dutch language had exposed them. *Pujangga Baru* never got printed on luxury paper, printed in 500 copies, its total of paid subscriptions during its 20 years of existence from July 1933 onward never exceeded the initial 150. On the other hand, Takdir became the main spokesman for this camp in a long and frequently tense polemic. Not all Indonesians were as unequivocally committed to western style development, Indonesian nationalists were as frequently attracted to a cultural fundamentalism built on the old Indonesian values. Movements such as *Taman Siswa* (Ki Hajar Dewantara's cultural-nationalist movement) and the Moslem Muhammadiyah were deeply ambivalent about the ideas of people such as Takdir, they sought political nationalism thought cultural nationalism and hence had a strong conservative

inclination which valued the Indonesian heritage more than the Western promise. These people approached the West and its values tentatively, convinced that they needed to consolidated the Indonesian-nest of their heritage before they could safely confront the onslaught of the new values. Ki Hadjar argued that "we wish to retain our identity as long as possible and to became part of the higher unity only when we can make ourselves felt as equals in relation to the other parts" (Dewantara, 1967: 161) but elsewhere he expressed a deeper distrust of the new values:

"It was by popularizing western education that King intellect emerged as the autocrat, the dictator of our mind. Slowly but surely, loftier feelings gave way to the tyrant who tolerated no equal beside him. With such a selfish and materialistic ruler dominating our inner life, it goes without saying that individualism very soon appeared as powerful factor in the process of our social disruption" (Dewantara, 1967: 153).

Some among the Pujangga Baru group too tried to keep the cultural onslaught at arm's length. Within literary circles, the tension focuses around the debate between art for art's sake (the position advocated by the mystic poet and later historian, Sanusi Pane) and also Takdir.<sup>7</sup> The writers of this period were heavily influenced by European Romanticism, but takdir's attitude gradually hardened into a philosophy of life as struggle-part of his poem struggle cries. "Peace and harmony?/No, No, my God!/ It is only in struggle/that one can experience peace and harmony." "At the same time Sanusi Pane was declaring" I create for art's sake, but this does not mean agreement with the cry for individualism, rather that art should join in mystical union of collectivism in its unity with the world and its people". (Jassin, 1967: 107).

Alisjahbana has written that in his own view the major influences upon him until 1950:

"Were the Dutch education I received, and the experiences on the death of my wife which resulted in the collection of poetry Tebaran Mega. In my education as a teacher, which took nine years, I strongly felt the influence of Dr. G.J. Nieuwenhuis, a reformer of Dutch education in Indonesia in the '20's who emphasized the importance of personality in language and other expressions. My law education from 1937 to 1942 opened for me the broad array of the social sciences and reinforced my scientific and philosophical mind. Especially the Hegelian Professor Eggens, who taught Civil -----

\*) The polemic of Indonesian literary life in this century are fascinating, and a rich source for understanding Indonesian nationalism; Takdir's concept of committed art eventually came to look very non-doctrinaire in contrast to the heavy ideological content of these polemics in the Guided Democracy period, when Takdir ranked as a liberal humanist against the LEKRA sponsored socialist aesthetics (LEKRA: Lembaga Kesenian Rakyat/Institute for Popular Art).

Law, sharpened my dialectical logic in a its social implications since from the very beginning I was attracted to Hegelian dialectics and comprehensiveness.

As a result said Takdir, I do not have the feeling that certain books have determined my growth. The total atmosphere of modern education awakened the dynamic forces in me, so that I felt at home with the various thinkers and writers of modern culture, be it with a De Kat Angelino, J.J.L. Duyvendak, Henriette Rolland Holst-van der Schalk (socialist thinker and poetess), Rimbaud, Valery and many others. I was jumping from one author to another for the rebellious feeling I felt towards the whole traditional culture in my favor for the modern attitude. Important in this connection is my introduction to Puisi Baru (New Poetry)

where I already clearly based my self on the Renaissance which has fascinated me from the beginning. Typical of my unconventional breach through the confusing array of thought, ideas and currents was my book collection which drew the remark of Dr. Verhoeven, Director of the (Dutch) Foundation for Cultural Cooperation (Jakarta), when browsing through my bookshelves: "What exactly is your real interest? I can not see it from your books here!"

Frankly speaking, as told by Takdir, that a person who had great influence in my development and career was Dr. K.A.H. Hidding, who later became Professor of Comparative Religion and Rector of the University of Leiden. I remember him as a person with a liberal philosophical religious mind and with a socialistic undertone. As head of the Balai Pustaka (official government publishing house) he made great efforts to get me a

position as assistant of Indonesian language at the University of Leiden, in order to enable me to get an academic education. However, at that time Professor van Ronkel rejected me, because he considered me too modern in my linguistic and literary writings and ideas. Later Dr. Hidding allowed me, while working in the Balai Pustaka, to finish my studies at the Law School in Jakarta. In the mid-30's I regularly spent my time reading the most difficult Dutch poetry with him, for instance Boutens, H. Roland Holst and others. I used this opportunity very often to sharpen my cultural insight by bringing into discussion problems of East and West, cultural transformations, problems of ethics etc. But already at that time I went my own way. He accepted my introduction to *Puisi Lama* (traditional Poetry) to be published by Balai Pustaka, but rejected my introduction to *Puisi Baru* (New Poetry) which attempted to look for its sources in the Renaissance. He considered this view of Western man unacceptable to him, so that *Puisi Baru* could not be published by Balai

Pustaka and was later published by my self during the revolution.

Besides, Takdir had been active in the Nationalist Youth Congress in 1926, and after the subsequent congress of 1928 which proclaimed for the first time that Indonesia is one people, one nation and possesses one language, Bahasa Indonesia. He and the Pujangga Baru group called a Language Conference in 1938 which argued strongly for the modernization of Bahasa Indonesia. Takdir's view on a broad range of cultural issues at this time can be found in his contributions to *Polemik Kebudayaan* (Cultural Polemic) collected by the novelist Achdiat K. Mihadja (Mihadja, 1954), which gives a clear overview of the pre-war debates. A wide spectrum of Takdir's writings on the Indonesian Language to 1957 are gathered together in Takdir (1975). I have discussed more fully elsewhere (Nichterlein, 1974: 222-240) the issues surrounding the growth of the Indonesian Language at this time, here it is sufficient to note that a large section of the Indonesian nationalist intelligentsia was committed to using Indonesian as the national language of an independent nation state, and that for clear political reasons the Dutch inhibited the use and development of that language. It is also significant that while the Malay base of Bahasa Indonesia was in widespread use the Indonesian archipelago, there is good reason to doubt that it was useful a lingua franca as has frequently been assumed because the lack of a standardized grammar and morphology meant that there were many regional variation tantamount to dialects. There lay before the Indonesian nationalists a huge task in organizing and disseminating the standardization of Bahasa Indonesia to use it as a "language of modern consciousness" to replace the Dutch of their political masters.

On top of that, a radical change in the political and intellectual climate of the Netherlands East Indies took place

when the Japanese occupied the archipelago on March 9, 1942. The Japanese sought to harness the efforts of the Indonesians to the pursuit of the Greater East Asian prosperity Sphere, and to this end supported the suppression of Dutch in favor of Bahasa Indonesia which, together with Japanese, became the official language of the Occupation Administration. On October 20, 1942,

the Indonesian Language Commission was established. "Its members, who were later to be the leaders of the Indonesian people, were given the task of determining a modern terminology, a standard grammar, and an everyday vocabulary. By the time the Japanese Occupation had ended, the language had been enriched by 7.000 new terms. During the Revolution, the provisional constitution raised Indonesian to the rank of official language, this was no longer the proclamation of a theory but the confirmation of a fact".

Takdir served on the Language Commission as "expert secretary" and was at the same time Head of the Office of Indonesian Language, but he was eventually jailed by the Japanese for subversive activity. The journal *Pujangga Baru* was banned from the beginning of the occupation because of its independent character. The Japanese stand point was clearly formulated by writers such as Uio Tomizawa who "denounced the spirit of the European Renaissance as something which had been threatening Asian values for several decades" (Alisjahbana, 1962: 36).<sup>7</sup>

Finally, after the achievement of Indonesian independence, Takdir became chairman of the re-constituted Language Commission of the Republic of Indonesia from 1945-1950. During this time he organized the *Perkumpulan Memajukan Ilmu dan Kebudayaan* (Association for the Advancement of Science and Culture) which -----

<sup>7</sup>) It is interesting to note that Takdir's opponent in the earlier polemics, Sanusi Pane, was able to

cooperate whole- heartedly with the Japanese because he felt that there had now occurred a synthesis of these eastern mysticism values which he held in higher regard than the individualist materialism and rationalism of the West. established an underground senior high school in Dutch-occupied Jakarta. It was this association that organized the *Akademi Nasional* (National Academy) that later became the *Universitas Nasional* of which Professor Takdir Alisjahbana was Rector (1968-1993). He has held many other academic posts and edited several other journals since the demise of the revived *Pujangga Baru* in 1955.

In his 1955 discussion of "Traditional and Modern Values in Asian Culture" Takdir describes the "dilemma of the Asian intellectual" who participates in the modern era with its imperative of a broad vision but he belongs also to an underdeveloped nation of which the greater part is upholding the old values. If, in addition, we realize that the Asian intellectual is fully aware of the fact that the Western world is itself facing a crisis, that its values are menaced by a tide of secularism, skepticism, and relativism, we understand his vacillation between two attitudes: his response of the crisis of Asian culture brought about by the still continuing impact of the West, and his reaction to that other greater crisis, the crisis of modern man, embracing the whole of mankind" (Alisjahbana, 1955: 315).

In this paper, Alisjahbana broadly anticipates some of his later conclusions; he reminds us that the five hundred year contrast between East and West marks but a small interval in the entire six thousands years of man's history; while all is skeptic and "everything had to be re-valued", it nevertheless "cannot be denied that the whole of history proves that material progress has always been followed by spiritual progress and vice versa, and that there is an endless dialectic interplay between

matter and spirit". (Alisjahbana, 1955: 319). He looks forward to a time when "the traditional Asian values will no longer be Asian values alone, but enriched with the values of other parts of the world, they will assist in the creation of modern values for the whole of mankind". (Alisjahbana, 1955: 320).

In 1960 his *Indonesia in the Modern World* was published. In the preface to the second edition of this book (re-titled *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution*, published in 1966) Alisjahbana noted that the two books are substantially the same, though the second has two additional chapters. *Indonesia in the Modern World* was commissioned by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and written in Paris, presumably in 1958. Both books expand on the themes tentatively explored in the earlier articles. Alisjahbana juxtaposes the dynamic culture of the West against what he sees as the essentially static heritage of Indonesia: the traditional village life of the little tradition is depicted as sterile and unreflective, the prisoner of tradition. The great tradition of the courts of Indonesian history is similarly disparaged for its overblown aestheticism and feudal oppression. He sees almost no virtue in the truly indigenous part of the Indonesian heritage, but regards the Hindu impact as the first beginnings of cultural flowering, followed by the stimulus of Islam which insists on a gulf between Man and God and thus challenges the mysticism premises of the animist tradition. It was the Islamic experience which paved the

way for the influence of Western culture with all its dynamic promise. But while Alisjahbana seems still committed to the modernist appropriation of Western values in Indonesia, he does recognize that there are problems.

Alisjahbana spent the years 1959-1961 as a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral

Sciences at Stanford, and the following year as Visiting Senior Scholar at the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii. At the end of 1962 he was in a dilemma. To go back to Indonesia "was out of the question, since Sukarno in my opinion had grown more and more unreasonable, but nevertheless I would like to stay nearer to Indonesia where I have my roots. There was for me no other choice but to go to Malaysia". (Correspondence, March 25, 1974). In 1963 he accepted the Chair as Head of the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Malaya, which he held until 1968.

Alisjahbana returned to Indonesia in 1968 to become Rector of Universitas Nasional in Jakarta. After the confrontations policies of Sukarno, there was a new mood of reconciliation abroad within the region. Alisjahbana began to work further toward the reconciliation of the Malay and Indonesian languages and in the general atmosphere of Indonesian-Malaysian fraternity he wrote a paper on "The Unity of the Malay Culture" in 1971 which returns to the theme of cultural universalism (Alisjahbana, 1971): "The cultures of China, India, the Middle East and modern Europe as well as the indigenous Malay culture have entered here (Southeast Asia) into a conflict and confluence as nowhere else in the world. And it is to be hoped that through this unique confluence and amalgamation as well as conflict between the great cultural traditions of the whole of mankind, Southeast Asia or the Malay culture will be able to contribute to the shaping of the arising world society and culture". (Alisjahbana, 1973).

At the fifteenth World Congress of Philosophy at Varna in 1973, Professor Alisjahbana presented two papers. In his "Modern Secular Man and the Unity of Mankind" he outlines the achievements of Western culture since the renaissance, and then discusses the way in which man's very control over nature has come to threaten humankind.

I would like to conclude, that Takdir Alisjahbana might well be seen not only as an individual constructing his own ontological framework from a wide diversity of sources, but also in relation to the broader intellectual exercise of Indonesians - and other non-westerners - who are trying to reconcile two deep cultural impetuses in their writings.

### A PROGRESSIVE CULTURE WAS IN TAKDIR CONCERN

It has been discussed in the Seminar, that productivity and creativity of our nation since the independent day in 1945 is decreased, if we would compare with our hard struggle against the colonizers. That phenomenon, gave an impression, that we were exaggerating our former struggle to be independent, but the opposite was true. We failed to give a significant meaning for our independence - with those positive notions such as, a dynamic mentality, vitality, productivity, creativity, etc., to our nation and culture after the independent day (1945). It seems that from the whole aspect of "cultural paradigm" today, our productivity and creativity are on the stagnant situation. Therefore, our responsibility to catch up the brilliant idea and our wish to struggle and ready to sacrifice with our body and soul are decreasing. Observing that static condition, according to Takdir, our nation must reconstruct the idea of "human existence". In order to be human, refine culture and civilization related to the former history and to the future of mankind in the modern world dominated by science, technology and economics. The idea of human existence must be developed. The modern culture which is running for centuries, the configuration of its values are dominated with science and economics and amplified by the development of technology.

This writing would like to describe Takdir's thought on education. His

frame of thought that science produces technology. Therefore, in order to get technology, the function of education is to provide well educated people. Because the process of education permeates the production of a high quality people that is badly needed by a country to create its industrial society. Thus, it is an interesting phenomenon in tracing back Takdir's idea about "technology". He states that technology is the product of theoretical and economic evaluating process. The theoretical evaluating process gives it the necessary knowledge of nature, the economic makes an efficiency in the production of end goods on the basis of theoretical knowledge. It is clear that the greatest achievement of technology is found in the sphere of economic life, i.e. in the production of economic goods.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the progress of technology is thought of as the greatest consequence for individual, social, and cultural life. Through the tremendous increase in production, better satisfaction of human needs is made possible. On the other hand, technology, based on rational mathematical logic, has the tendency to make "man himself" as an abstract subject in relations to a technological society and culture. Not only man himself disappear in relations to the products of his/her labor, but also replaced by the value on the amount of money he/she receives.

Therefore, according to Takdir, the core of the problems of modern life is that the process of abstraction threatens to undermine man's personal life as well as his social relations. The personality loses the feeling of security, and in social life, the feeling of solidarity is weakened. Furthermore, Takdir states that technology as a by product of science forces us not to forget the fact about the relationship of technology and science as is a dialectical one. New knowledge of the laws of nature and new discoveries of the potentialities of nature unavoidably lead to an improvement of technology. But an improvement of technology, which



puts at the disposal of man new tools and implementations, enables him to arrive at more accurate knowledge, more generalized laws. For example, the expansion of transportation system to become important for travelers and traders as well as for political central received a strong stimulus from the invention of the steam engine, which was related to the extensive use of coal and iron, finally the use of oil and electricity instead of coal. Electric power, telegraphy, radio and television made a better communications and relations through the remotest areas. It is clear that the most important contribution of technology provides a man opportunities to make possible the tremendous progress of society, especially in the term of economics. In this connection, the development of technology-speaking in the broad sense organs, and human energy. This means that mans material as well as spiritual achievements can be multiplied endlessly. The above observation is clearly make sense for us that the significant meaning of the existence of technology since the 19 century for the whole people has become more apparent. It is told also by Soedjatmoko, a former president of the United Nations University in Tokyo (1979-1983), that the homogenization of modern man and his increasing other-directness, the growing superficiality and spiritual emptiness of modern life, the coming revolt of the masses, the rapidly changing fads in dress and music, and in general the high violability of moods and lifestyles, culminating in mindless consumerism.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, the negative phenomenon of the impact of technology for the trend of attitudes among men must be noticed in order other majority people still have a good attitude towards the development of technology in the future. From above discussion, Takdir reminds us that a culture which dominated by science, technology and economics is

called "a progressive culture."<sup>5</sup> On the opposite, a culture which the values of religion and art are dominant is called "an expressive culture". In the last explanation that phenomenon is still at work among the majority of people and considered as the national characteristic or personality.

The main different between the closed static traditional and modern culture is that the traditional culture views the purpose of education was to ensure cultural continuity by passing on certain inherited values and customs to the younger generation in their purest form, whereas in modern culture education always has a revolutionary role to play. Therefore, one central aspect of this problem is the formulation of educational goals that enables us to attain a better way of life, and a school system that can put these goals into effect.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the important aspect of all is to execute the education in order to achieve the standard of quality of life.

From the above discussion, the idea of Takdir is still consistent in the concern of his support for "western culture" which dominated by science, technology and economics for the best choice of the Indonesian people in the future, if they intend to be a progress nation.

It is frankly said by Takdir that:

"the intelligence of Indonesian people must be exercised to be similar with the Western people. The consciousness of individualism must be survival the Indonesian people must be suggested on the collection of materials as much as possible. To all the Indonesian people must be developed".<sup>7</sup>

All of his idea was really opposed by other participants which defended "traditional culture" such as Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Sanoesi Pane, M. Amir, R. Soetomo, etc. on the "National Congress of Education" on June 8-9, 1935 in Solo and continued in the second and

third polemic with entitled "the clear symbols" on various newspaper (in Pujangga Baru, Suara Umum, Pewart Deli, Warsita) on October 1935 until April 1936. For example, according to Ki Hajar, local cultures are symbolic elements of the capital making of national culture; R. Soetomo tended to receive a middle way, which means to receive Indonesian culture as well as Western culture; but on the meantime Sanoesi Pane associated materialism, intellectualism and individualism with the sense of spiritualism and collectivism; and for Radjiman, our nationalism, and especially Javanese culture must be defended, because the Western culture is really different.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, between two groups of polemics whether those who support Western culture and those who support National culture do exist. It is interesting to see the idea of Umar Kayam, the senior lecturer in Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. According to Kayam, "the important one, how to make the national culture as the process of dialog between element of local culture and Western culture as such kind of an "interplay" is fair.<sup>9</sup> In the distant past, almost four decades ago since the "National Congress of Education" in 1935, one should note the opinion of Y.B. Mangunwijaya in Kompas newspaper on December 12, 1978, he clearly said, "that Ki Hadjar Dewantara and Taman Siswa dominates the formal concept of our education. But in reality, Takdir won the practice of education".<sup>10</sup>

Let us take another supporter Western culture, such as B.J. Habibie, the minister of Science and Technology for (1992-1997).

His program of Science and Technology for industrial advancement is in line with the idea of Takdir on modernization. Habibie said, "I praised Japan which has

succeeded her industrial program in many sectors, and also her significant role of economic development in the Asia Pacific. So, Indonesia should develop her industry together with Japan or Europe or not at all".<sup>11</sup>

As a result, according to Takdir, the defeat of our nation is due to the dominance of "expressive culture" instead of the dominance of "progressive culture" that dominated by economics, mathematics, and technology.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it was no wonder, in 1950s Takdir loudly spoke the "Crisis" in Indonesian culture, specifically in the field of education, because of lacking the vital elements and dynamics of the national culture and national education. This crisis can be overcome if national culture provided by Western Culture, such as intellectualism, individualism, materialism, and egoism. Therefore, the afraid of those Western items, according to Takdir, leads to the backwardness of Indonesian people and incapability of facing international competition.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE STRATEGY TO MAINTAIN A PROGRESSIVE CULTURE

How is the strategy of Takdir in order to maintain a progressive culture, where the function of education as a tool to modernize their nation. In order to know it throughout Takdir's

novels should be observed. First, Takdir said, that education should produce the initiative and creativity mentality to the people. In his novel *Kalah dan Menang*<sup>14</sup> (The defeat and victory), 1978, is more emphasize for getting the success of initiative and creativity. For example, Takdir illustrated the role of doctor Toshio Maki, the family of Katsuhiko (the main actor) who lived in Hiroshima.

While the city of Hiroshima hit bomb by America in World War two, August 9, 1945, it caused a big victims and terrible accident of humanity, he lost his two daughters and also his wife was injured seriously. But, with his initiative and creativity, doctor Maki built "emergency hospital" to treat the victims of an atomic bomb, although the facility and capacity of that hospital are very simple, lack of medicines and services. But, he never despair to that effort to cure those serious victims. That true story told by doctor Maki to Katsuhiko, former Japanese soldier who had experience in Indonesia, as the fact in history. This novel commented by Takdir, that it could not be rejected, that this soldiers just entirely submitted their soul and body to sacrifice to the sacred mission of Emperor (Hirohito) as the manifestation of the Amaterasu Omikami (the magnificent of God sun) that full of magic and mystic. But, the opposite, that the real defeat of Japan in World War two (1945), because her backwardness of wealth, science, economics and technology compared with her Western powers.

Second, Takdir said that education has correlation with rationality. Certainly, more higher of education from any person will be more rational of his attitude and morality in the

implementation. Thus, through one of the main characters of his most important pre-war novel, Layar Terkembang<sup>15</sup> (with Full

Sails, 1937), Takdir really expressed his disapproval of religious attitudes as he had observed among villagers who left religious matters completely to Kiyahi, religious teachers. Consequently, that the villagers did not and could not understand the essence of religion. For them religion was just rituals and

ceremonies led by the Kiyahi whom they blindly followed. On the same condition, he did not also agree with the religion as practiced by the priyayi, members of the Javanese bureaucracy. These people, although educated, did not understand their religion which they in general only began to study seriously upon reaching the pension age. For them too religion was confined to rituals and ceremonies. However different from the villagers who respected religion and the Kiyahi, the priyayi gave the impression as if they were ashamed of their religion. This was reflected, for example, in the way Selamatan (meal with a religious character) were held. The Kiyahi and his assistants who were to lead the Selamatan ceremony by expressing the necessary dua' (supplication) came stealthily through the backdoor of the priyayi's house and sat on a mat at a reserved but disrespectful section closed to the bathroom. The host and his guests, who usually also belonged to the priyayi group sat in chairs in a specially reserved and respectful section of the house. They chat with each other and let the Kiyahi and his assistants do the dua' without participating in it. Afterwards, the Kiyahi and his aids could go home, while the priyayi continued with their ownentertainment. For Tuty (as actress) in this novel-and this would be applicable to the author of the novel too, the religion which she wanted to hold on should be in line with her rational thinking and her innermost feelings.

Takdir was also aware of the new development of the trend of thought is Islamic circles. Another character of the same novel, whose name is Jusuf, reminded Tuty that not a few of the educated people wanted to understand their religion better by making a serious study of it. The publication of Koranic translations was according to Jusuf proof of this

phenomenon.

On the other hand, Takdir's high valuation of Islam, which has been reflected more and more in his writings in the last decade, is, I believe, based on his recognition of the existence of God and His Omnipotence and Omniscience as described in Islam. It should be remembered that Takdir has always stressed the power of man, the need for the unfolding of his abilities for which opportunities should be given, and the elevation of reason. And also the high replacement of rational thinking. However he never arrived at the idea of discarding God. Furthermore, Takdir stated

that Islam has the potential of boosting up the economic development of a country like Indonesia. He said, "Islam in principle accepts worldly life to its fullest extent", and urges its followers to make use of reason in the widest possible sense which is considered as a good deed blessed by God.<sup>16</sup> He also maintain that "more than any other religion", Islam very clearly urges his followers to ponder about nature, to make an investigation into it by making use of reason, and to enjoy nature's wealth.

It seems to the writer, that in discussing of Takdir's thought on education has correlation with the appreciation of rationality by taking an illustration of villagers and priyayi towards their understanding of their religion Islam and the potential meaning of Islamic teachings in using of intellect is very important. Even though, Takdir does not consider himself as one of the modernist Muslim thinkers, but it can be said that he is still searching for the truth as a Muslim as well as human being.

Third, Takdir said that education has implication to the attitude of responsibility. As was he told in his novel *Grotta Azzurra*<sup>17</sup> (the blue cave), that Hitler and Mussolini were represented of the fascism regime. They were clear and

interesting slogan to agitate the people's aspiration until the most of people considered that they really heard their conscience. That phenomenon was covered while Ahmad asked to his friend Conrad, as a member of party Hitler, that almost everyday was indoctrinated of Nazi's doctrines about the myth of Nazi, the sacred duty of German people, the superior of Aria race, the magnificent of Hitler, etc. Furthermore Conrad commented on that situation: "On the happiness to the beloved of my country, I really accepted all doctrines that thought me as a sense of responsibility". As a matter of fact in that condition no choice for me. The changes were very rapid on many sectors, almost whole people welcomed happily the progress of Nazi party, because they found again their beliefs in dignity after they got a great mock in Versailles agreement. And after that they found again the victory in many battle of fields in World War two until they truly unrealized their defeat under Hitler dictator leadership in 1945.

From above description, apparently it was told us that however the shape of regime for instance "fascism or democracy", the role of education generally to modernize whole people but particularly to cultivate the sense of responsibility for their attitudes in order to be progress nation.

It was told by Takdir above that the role of education has implication to the initiative, creativity, rationality and responsibility. From those views, how important to develop the "education" to the whole people until they become well educated people. Furthermore, Takdir discussed the strategy concerning the involved value to have a modern education among the people. He said, that in the first two decades of the twentieth century particularly, the desire to go to school became so strong that "more schools" came to be the most important popular

demand.<sup>18</sup> An increasing number of schools all kinds was, in fact, being established by the colonial government. But, within a short space of time it became clear every where that they were far too few to meet all the requests for admission that were being made. The new Indonesian awareness of the importance of science and learning for modern life was never really divined by the Dutch, whose primary purpose, as Takdir had mentioned before, was to set up these schools in order to provide the bureaucracies of their various organizations with lower and middle grade personnel. The training given in those early days amounted to little more than five years of reading, writing and a little arithmetic in the elementary schools.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, gradually the Indonesian people came to see the advantages of modern education. It provided them with better jobs and higher positions, raised their standard of living, improved their social standing, and provided them with a body of scientific knowledge of the utmost importance for modern living. Therefore, it was a very appropriate for the children of the nobility and the local notables. By acquiring modern education they could maintain their former status within the new social order. There were also many members of the middle classes and the intelligence who found that they could use modern education to improve their social standing. It was generally recognizes that in this period, Indonesian parents made colossal sacrifices to educate their children. Since often there were no elementary or secondary schools where their children could be thought in their own villages or local towns, the parents would often send them way to other villages and towns. The more advanced the schools, the father the children were from their parents. And since, up to the outbreak of the second World War, secondary and higher schools were to be found as a

rule only in a few large cities in Java,<sup>20</sup> many children from outside these cities, and especially from the outer Islands, had to go to schools which were as much as one or two weeks sailing distance from their homes. As a result, more educated people, of course it was undeniable that educated Indonesian were learning to respect themselves. Thanks mainly to their newly acquired understanding of contemporary concepts and theories of freedom and justice and also the sects of Independent which they were taught in school, and their growing confidence in their ability to a just to the atmosphere of modern culture, these Indonesian came gradually to ask both for their themselves and for their fellow Indonesians all the rights and opportunities that defenders of human rights fought for in Europe from the renaissance on wards. But ironically, the high schools and the colleges in which young Indonesian men and women were getting in a good modern education-very similar to that which young Dutch men and women were getting in Holland schools as well as in Dutch schools in Indonesia formed the central for all the movements of national awakening in the beginning of the twentieth century. These movements in turn be the all kinds of nationalist movements, and were in the last analysis the decisive factor in the struggle for Indonesia independence and for the elimination of Dutch colonialism from Indonesian soil.

#### TAKDIR'S POLICY PROGRAM ORIENTED

Takdir's policy program oriented in order to establish "an educational sphere" for young generation throughout two instruments:

First, by establishing an educational institution to exercise an intellectual and to develop academic society, which was well known "National University". As a private University, it was built on October 15,

1949, in Jakarta. Takdir said,<sup>21</sup> that its development through the centuries, the universities as an institution of learning has grown into the most important and decisive institution of our time and in the future. It is especially in the renaissance when man, and especially the thinkers and scholars liberated themselves gradually from the dominant position of the church, that the university has grown into a center of research and thought and of teaching, and thus providing society with the most competent leaders and workers in all fields of social politics and cultural life. In its further development in our time the university has become an institution with numerous still expanding branches in the form of faculties, area studies, departments, programs beside a great number of laboratories and other research institutions, all or not cooperating with each other.

On the other hand, in the Conference of Higher Education and The Future University in Turki, Finland, on August 1988-22 Takdir emphasized, that in the modern culture which based on science and technology, the position of university is a very strategic as a institution which efforts objectively to develop scientifically in whole aspects from nature until human being behavior. He also said, that the quality of lecturers, facilities of buildings, administration offices, libraries, the completely of laboratories were very necessary to improve in order the quality of a private and public universities were guaranteed. In this context, in order Indonesia rapidly develop to be modern nation, it is a very necessary to hold the program of "translation" a whole book of science and technology into Indonesian language. From that condition, it is expected all Indonesian people can read them and directly influence their knowledge soon.<sup>23</sup>

But the most important task and responsibility of the universities, said Takdir, that they have gradually to

become the highest reflective, integrative and creative intellectual centers which through the mobilization of the best minds the world over by its reflection, research and teaching will together and in solidarity spearhead the solution of the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare.<sup>24</sup>

Second, by establishing the art institute, which was well known called Toyabungkah (near Batur lake) in Bali, 1977. It is a center of reflection and creation.<sup>25</sup> It intends to bring together creative artists, theoreticians of art and culture Takdir as the leader of the Art Center formulates his task as creating an art for the future which should express human responsibility, human solidarity and the joy of a continuously expanding creative life. It has registered in Toyabungkah Center that up to now about 10 dances have been created, among others: A flower in Blossoming in Toyabungkah, Moonlight on Lake Batur, From Darkness to Light, Woman at the Crossroads, etc.

Takdir said, that to maintain a progressive culture we need the ethic of creativity in whole aspects.<sup>26</sup> Because the position of "art" is the sources of everything, therefore the strength of creativity must be grew and finally spread out through the whole fields of knowledge. He emphasized once again that the key word of all thing is the creativity. He frankly said, that the growth of creativity through the instrument of the happiness in learning and work hard. He suggested, that to maintain the strength of creativity come from the young around 16-30 years old which the most dynamic order. Furthermore, Takdir said that the "art" should as a "moral force" not as an entertainer in the crisis world which threatened by various dangers. The art that we need today is the art that has a sense of responsibility to

the destiny of the human being in the future. In this case, the position of art is similar with knowledge. Besides that, the role of art can drive of dynamic, the source of new perspective, the wealth of fantasy and vision, the spirit of love and full of hope to the new world. The art can be divided into two kinds. First, painting. Takdir suggested that painting should be produced an attractive painting to drive men more creative in thinking and building this nation.<sup>27</sup> He criticized many artists who produced their works which just appeal the sex and the egoism of characteristics. From that context, the role of an artist is a very significant if compare with other scientists. For example, the task of an artist can Table:

draw "picture" more concretely to potter the peace, the solidarity of man kind and the prosperous of nation. Second, dancing. According to Takdir, that dancing as the result of thinking and struggle to create a new men which has a dynamic mentality based on positive value and a new a vision of life.<sup>28</sup> From this context, the exhibition of dancing should potter a dynamic life, the creativity in new a life and the optimistic in the future-those items are very necessary in the process of nation building.

It can draw conclusion, that based on Tadir's thought on education, can be seen in the table below:

#### TAKDIR CONCEPTION ON EDUCATION

SUBJECT	TARGET OF EDUCATION
1. The function of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to provide well educated people</li> <li>- to permeate the production of a high quality people</li> </ul>
2. The implication of education, (in order to achieve a progressive culture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the education should produce: initiative, creativity, rationality, and responsibility mentality</li> </ul>
3. The image of modern nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- characterized by science &amp; technology</li> </ul>
4. The ideal of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to make more rapid information, transformation, transportation, etc.</li> <li>- to make better life of whole human being.</li> </ul>
5. The ideal of Indonesian people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to have better education</li> <li>- to have positive mentalities for example, initiative, creative,</li> <li>- to develop a progressive culture than an expressive culture</li> </ul>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the above discussion, the conclusion can be drawn that Takdir Alisjahbana is one of the most prominent Indonesian philosopher and educator in the early twentieth century. Apart from his brilliant thought that if Indonesian would like to be a progress nation in the future, the national culture must be fulfilled by Western Culture in order to improve a dynamic elements such as, intellectual ethos, individualism, materialism, and egoism. For us Takdir's thought is a very significant to develop our nation in order our five years development (Pelita Six) which the main focus the quality of man powers are rapidly improved. In this respect it is very reasonable that Mangunwijaya should argue "that Ki Hadjar Dewantara and Taman Siswa dominates the formal concept of our education, but in reality, Takdir Alisjahbana won the practice of education. Thus, it is fact that among Universities which are established in Indonesia which the main task to a explore science and technology, to develop creativity and rationality, to publish translation books, to do teaching and research, etc., that is the manifestation of Western Culture, which Takdir was a very consistent to campaign throughout his works and discussions up to die. His reformism certainly lies in his ceaseless discussion, debating and publishing works to counter other philosophers such as, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, R. Sutomo, Sanusi Pane, etc., on what he regards to keep indigenous culture.

## NOTES

1. Takdir Alisjahbana (Eds.), *Kreativitas (Creativity)*, Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1983, p. 182; Alisjahbana, Takdir, *The Development of Indonesian Language and Literature*, New Haven, 1962; Alisjahbana, Takdir,

Xavier S. Thani Nayagam and Wang Gungwu (eds), *The Cultural Problems of Malaysia in the Context of Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur, 1967; Alisjahbana, *"Traditional and Modern Values in Asian Culture"*. In: Confluence, Harvard, 1955; Alisjahbana, *"Customary Law and Modernization"*, unpublished paper presented to the Customary Law Conference, Singapore, 1964; Alisjahbana, *"The Relations Between the Advanced and the Developing Nations and the Pursuit of World Peace"*, unpublished paper delivered to the Conference for the Promotion of World Peace, Tokyo, 1964; Alisjahbana *"The Unity of Malay Culture"*, unpublished paper presented to the Southeast Asian Regional Conference on the Study of Malay Culture. Puncak Pass, 1971; Alisjahbana, *"Language Planning for Modernization: The Case of Indonesia and Malaysia"*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976.

2. Ibid., p. 188.

3. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society and Culture*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1974, p. 182.

4. Soedjatmoko, *"Cultural Identity of Third World Countries and The Impact of Modern Communications"*, in Mochtar Lubis (Eds.), *Pelangi 70 Tahun Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana*, Jakarta: Akademi Jakarta, 1979, p. 169.

5. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, Op.Cit., p. 195-198; Abuhasan Asy'ari, *"Mencari Perumusan Warisan Budaya"*, in Suara Pembaharuan (Newspaper), June 17, 1992; interview with Abuhassan Asy'ari (he is a assistant of Takdir).

6. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 201.

7. Achdiat K. Mihardja, *Polemik*



*Kebudayaan (The Cultural Polemic)*, Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1977, p. 42; Dewantara, Ki Hadjar, "Some Aspects of National Education and the Taman Siswa Institute of Yogyakarta", 1933, In: Indonesia 4, Ithaca, 1967.

8. Nirwan Dewanto, "Kebudayaan Indonesia: Pandangan Seorang Penyair", dalam Kongres Kebudayaan 1991: Kebudayaan Indonesia dan Dunia ("The Indonesian Culture: From the view of Poet", in The Congress of Culture 1991: *The Indonesian Culture and The World*), Volume V, Jakarta: Depdikbud, 1992/1993, p. 205.

9. Umar Kayam, "Kebudayaan Nasional dan Kebudayaan Baru" (National Culture and the New Culture), dalam Ibid., Volume II, p. 440.

10. *Kompas* (Newspaper), December 12, 1978.

11. Jimmy Siahaan and Harun Umar interviewed with B.J. Habibie, in *Ilmu dan Budaya* (magazine), Th. VII, No. 6, March 1985, p. 431.

12. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Kalah dan Menang* (The Defeat and Victory), Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1981, p. 471.

\*) Concerning "materialism", Takdir said, That Indonesian people should strongly effort to get materials throughout to be business man and not quickly to be despair to do it. We had sincerely to recognize our GNP (Gross National Product) if we compare with Malaysia less more than five times and also will be forty times with Japan (see: *Kompas*, February, 6, 1992).

13. Ignas Kleden (Eds.), *Kebudayaan Sebagai Perjuangan: Perkenalan Dengan Pemikiran S. Takdir Alisjahbana* (Culture as means of struggle: The Introduction into Takdir's Thought), Jakarta, Dian Rakyat, 1988, p. xi.

14. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Kalah dan Menang* (The Defeat and Victory), Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1981, p. 411-

423.

15. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Layar Terkembang*, Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1937, 42-44; W. Udin (Eds.), *Spectrum: Essays presented to S. Takdir Alisjahbana on his birthday (70s)*, Jakarta, Dian Rakyat, 1978; Nichterlein, Sue, "An Essay n Transcultural Intellectual Biography: Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana", p. 61-89, loc. Cit.

16. S. Takdir Alisjahbana "Pembangunan Ekonomi dan Etik Ekonomi Islam" (The Economic Development and Ethic Economic of Islam), in the seminar of Indonesia Philosophical Association, January 13-16, 1972, p. 246.

17. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Grotta Azzura: Kisah Cinta dan Cita* (Grotta Azzurra: The Story of love and idea), Jakarta: 1978, p. 81-85.

18. S. Takdir Alisjahbana, *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution*, Op.Cit., p. 25-26.

19. Ibid., p. 27.

20. Ibid., p. 30.

21. *Ilmu dan Budaya* (magazine), Th VII, No. 6, Maret 1985, p. 401-403; see, S. Takdir Alisjahbana's paper, "The Task of the New University", for the meeting of University Rectors on December 18, 1984 in the International House of Japan, Tokyo.

22. *Ilmu dan Budaya* Th XI, No. 6, Maret 1989.

23. *Kompas*, October 23, 1980.

24. *Ilmu dan Budaya*, Maret 1985, Op.Cit., p. 403; S. Takdir Alisjahbana (Eds.), *Dasar-Dasar Krisis Semesta dan Tanggung Jawab Kita* (the element of World Crisis and our Responsibility), p. 208-210.

25. *Kompas*, March 14, 1980; S. Takdir Alisjahbana (Eds.), *Kreativitas* (Creativity), Op.Cit., p. 183.

26. Ibid.

27. *Merdeka* (newspaper), May 5, 1981.

28. *Kompas*, January 14, 1980.